

The Third Sunday of Easter
04-05-2025
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Acts 9: 1-20 Paul's Conversion

Psalms 30 I cried out to the Lord and he healed me.

Revelation 5: 6-14 The Angels and all living things proclaim
"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

John 21:1-19 The resurrected Jesus provides a catch of fish.
He has breakfast with them on the shore.
Jesus questions Peter, "Do you love me?".

Introduction

This morning I would like us to look at our relationship with God through Jesus.

In the bible readings from The Acts of the Apostles and John's Gospel we hear how Paul and Peter encountered Jesus, and the question that these readings might bring to us is, how do we encounter Jesus in our lives.

So let us look at the stories today of Peter, and of Paul, and let us consider how we encounter Jesus in our lives, and then how we act on what we have encountered.

John's Gospel

Let's look first at Chapter 21 of John's Gospel and Peter's encounter with Jesus.

It begins with a miraculous catch of fish. Sometimes when we encounter Jesus in our lives it can be miraculous. Miracles are not something we generally encounter in our normal daily lives, However, if we believe in a God who created everything there is to see in the natural world, we should not be surprised if this God has control over the natural world. Sometimes we may encounter Jesus in the miraculous.

Next, we hear how Jesus shared breakfast with Peter and the other disciples. We hear how they were scared to say it was Jesus, but they knew who it was. Sometimes when we encounter Jesus it can be a bit frightening. I recall a story one lady told me of being in a group and praying with others, and they were praying for the gift of praying in tongues. When she received the gift and

started praying in tongues, she was so terrified that she picked up her bible and her bag and went straight home without saying another word to anyone. Sometimes when we encounter the power of Jesus in our lives it can be a little frightening or scary.

And finally in today's gospel reading we hear Jesus questioning Peter, repeatedly asking, "Do you love me?" Sometimes our encounters with Jesus can be challenging. And sometimes we need to be challenged by God in our lives.

Acts – Paul's Conversion

And now let us look at Paul's encounter with Jesus from our reading in the Acts of the Apostles. It occurs after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus has already taken place.

Paul had a massive and totally life altering experience. Paul was blinded and heard God speaking to him in a physical and audible way. Paul went from being a persecutor of Christians to being a Proclaimer of the Gospel. Paul's encounter with Jesus, led to him totally changing his life. Not all Christians will have the same sort of encounter with Jesus as Paul did. In fact, most of us won't have an encounter like that. I recall a Parish Priest where I ministered at Sunnybank who shared how he had received a word from God that led him to set up a very successful ministry in Africa. Paul had a supernatural encounter with Jesus. The important aspect of this encounter was not only its supernatural nature, but the fact that Paul acted on this encounter.

Are we acting on the encounters we have with Jesus in our lives?

Encountering Jesus - Now

And how do we encounter Jesus in our lives today. We may have supernatural experiences, and as Christians we all have the Holy Spirit within us, but generally we will experience Jesus in the normal flow of our lives and in the life of the church.

We experience Jesus in the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. As Christians in the Anglican Tradition, we say the definition of a sacrament is the outward and physical sign of and inward and spiritual grace. With baptism the water is the outward sign, but the spiritual significance is dying with Christ and coming out of the water as a new Creation in Christ. In the Eucharist the bread and wine we consume is the physical sign, but the spiritual significance is the encouragement we receive in the body and blood of Jesus.

We encounter Jesus as we read the Bible. The more we know and are immersed in the word of God, the more we will encounter Jesus.

We encounter Jesus as we pray. I recall the previous Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams saying that he needed to pray for an hour each day, but it might be only for a few minutes of that hour that he felt being in the inner presence of God. The more we commit to prayer in our lives, the more likely we will encounter Jesus in real and meaningful way, for our lives.

We encounter Jesus when we gather with other Christians to worship God. In Worship we read the bible and we pray, but it is more than that. As human beings we are communal creatures. We only actually exist in community. In our western culture we have become very individualistic, but as the poet John Donne put it,

“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main”

When we gather together as Christians, and give praise to God, we are drawn closer to Jesus.

Conclusion

Today we have talked about our Relationship with Jesus. We have looked at the encounters Jesus had with some of his first followers.

These encounters made them want to follow Jesus.

The question for us today is, how do we say “yes to Jesus”, as Peter and Paul both said “yes to Jesus”, and what does it mean for us in our lives?

The last words of Jesus to Peter in today’s gospel are, “Follow me.”

I recall a minister in another church saying he would regularly greet the members of his congregation with three questions.

How is Your UP, Your IN and Your OUT?

Where:-

UP is your relationship with God through Jesus.

IN is your relationship with other Christians, and

OUT is your relationship with those you know who are not yet Christians.

I believe in the readings today we have been asked to look at the UP, but I also believe that the IN and the OUT naturally follow.

So how is your UP, your IN, and your OUT?